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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution 64/88, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it, after consulting with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

The present report refers to correspondence between the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations regarding actions taken by the Government of Israel in implementing the relevant provisions of the resolution. It also presents the information made available by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA to the Secretary-General on the return of refugees registered with the Agency to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

* A/65/150.

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1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to paragraph 5 of its resolution 64/88, entitled "Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities", the operative part of which reads:

> *The General Assembly,*
>
> 1. *Reaffirms* the right of all persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities to return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967;
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> 2. *Expresses deep concern* that the mechanism agreed upon by the parties in article XII of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 13 September 1993 on the return of displaced persons has not been complied with, and stresses the necessity for an accelerated return of displaced persons;
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> 3. *Endorses*, in the meanwhile, the efforts of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to continue to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis, and as a temporary measure, to persons in the area who are currently displaced and in serious need of continued assistance as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities;
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> 4. *Strongly appeals* to all Governments and to organizations and individuals to contribute generously to the Agency and to the other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned, for the above-mentioned purposes;
>
> 5. *Requests* the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General, to report to the General Assembly before its sixty-fifth session on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the present resolution.

2. On 10 May 2010, the Secretary-General addressed notes verbales to the Permanent Representatives of Member States, including the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under the resolution and requested the Permanent Representative to inform him of any action his or her Government had taken or envisaged taking in implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution.

3. In a note verbale dated 28 June 2010, the Permanent Representative of Israel replied as follows:

> The Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to the latter's note, dated 10 May 2010, concerning resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session under the agenda item "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East".
>
> While Israel voted against these resolutions, as it has done on similar resolutions adopted in the past, the Permanent Mission wishes to reiterate Israel's support for UNRWA's humanitarian activities. In this respect, Israel reaffirms its intention to continue facilitating UNRWA's extension of humanitarian services to its beneficiaries in the field.

Despite an ongoing and acute threat to its security, Israel has gone to great lengths fostering conditions for Palestinian economic development and cooperation, including liberalization of the system by which civilian goods enter Gaza, as well as engaging in political dialogue with the Palestinian Authority and assisting in extending humanitarian assistance to Palestinian beneficiaries.

Over the last year, Israel has substantially eased the security-related restrictions in the West Bank. Since 2008, the number of key checkpoints has been reduced from 41 to 14. Since April 2008, 357 obstacles (earth mound, roadblocks) have been removed. In January 2010, 10 roadblocks were removed on Route 60, the major north-south artery in the West Bank. Generally, movement from north to south in the West Bank is now smooth, with only a few checkpoints along the way, operated as normally open. These and other positive developments have resulted in an economic growth rate of 8 per cent in the West Bank in 2009, accompanied by a growth in foreign investment of 600 per cent since 2008.

Despite Hamas, Israel continues to facilitate the entry of large quantities of humanitarian supplies into Gaza and maintains an ongoing humanitarian corridor for the transfer of perishable and staple food items into Gaza. In 2009, 738,576 tons (30,576 trucks) of human commodities were transferred to the Gaza Strip. In January and February 2010, 92,138.1 tons (4,056 trucks) were transferred. In 2009, 22,849 Palestinians exited the Strip, among them 10,544 patients and their companions, exiting for medical treatment in Israel. In 2009, 21,200 international organization staff members entered the Gaza Strip. In addition, numerous infrastructural projects have been advanced, including in the fields of housing, classrooms, sewage treatment plants and medical facilities. In this regard, in anticipation of winter, 3,607 tons of glass (103 truckloads) were transferred to Gaza in late 2009. Also, in the first quarter of 2010, 23 tons of iron and 25 tons of cement were transferred to the Gaza Strip from Israel, with an additional 39 tons of building material in May 2010. In June 2010, the Government of Israel has reviewed its policy towards Gaza and decided to liberalize the system by which civilian goods enter into Gaza, including expansion of the inflow of materials for civilian projects that are under international supervision.

Notwithstanding the above, terrorist organizations in the West Bank and the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip remain active in planning, preparing and attempting to execute terrorist attacks.

In 2009, 646 terrorist attacks emanated from or were carried out in the West Bank, leading to five deaths (three victims were shot and two were attacked and stabbed to death). The first half of 2010 witnessed an alarming escalation in terrorist activity against Israeli targets in the West Bank and the Jerusalem area. In the first two months of 2010, 87 terrorist attacks were carried out in the West Bank. In February 2010, an Israeli citizen was stabbed to death in one of these attacks. In March 2010, 89 attacks were recorded in the West Bank and Jerusalem: three explosive devices, five attacks by gunfire, two stone-throwing attacks, and 79 Molotov cocktails. In June 2010, an Israeli citizen was killed and three others were wounded when Palestinian terrorists opened fire on their vehicle.

In 2009, 699 terrorist attacks emanated from the Gaza Strip, killing nine Israeli citizens. Between January and March 2010, over 80 terrorist attacks from Gaza were recorded, including rocket and mortar fire, placement of improvised explosive devices, and small-arms fire against Israel. Three victims were murdered in these attacks — two Israeli soldiers and a Thai worker. The rocket and mortar attacks against Israel in the past year are a continuation of a nine-year-long terrorist campaign in which many thousands of such projects have been launched at Israeli civilian centres from Gaza. Troublingly, none of the above is mentioned in any of the aforementioned resolutions.

Notwithstanding its support for UNRWA's humanitarian activities, Israel remains concerned by the political motivation of the aforesaid resolutions, and is disturbed by the fact that they present a one-sided view which fails to reflect the reality on the ground. In this respect, public statements of UNRWA officials which are clearly political and one-sided in tone are deeply troubling. As a professional, humanitarian body, UNRWA must be vigilant in avoiding references to controversial matters of a political nature.

Israel supports a consolidation of UNRWA resolutions, and a removal of all extraneous political language. Moreover, Israel urges the Secretary-General and UNRWA to consider, together with the concerned parties, ways in which the United Nations can enhance the manner in which it advances the welfare of the Palestinian people.

In this respect, Israel favours an application in the Palestinian context of the standard principles guiding the United Nations with respect to treatment of refugees. Specifically, UNRWA's mandate should be such that entitlement to its services will be defined in a manner consistent with the standard United Nations policy on refugees. Furthermore, UNRWA's mandate should include the active promotion in the Palestinian context of the broadly applied United Nations goals of resettlement and local integration of refugees.

The annual General Assembly resolutions on UNRWA represent a politically motivated departure from the standard United Nations policy on refugee matters. This politicization of a strictly humanitarian issue has exacerbated the situation of the Palestinian refugees by preventing practical solutions to their needs, such as have been successfully implemented with respect to numerous groups of refugees around the world. Israel attaches importance to promoting such changes in these resolutions as will ensure that the mandate of UNRWA is consistent with the general principles guiding United Nations policy on refugees.

4. In connection with paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 64/88, the Secretary-General has obtained from the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) the information available to him on the return of refugees registered with the Agency. As indicated in previous reports on the subject, the Agency is not involved in any arrangements for the return of refugees, nor is it involved in any arrangements for the return of displaced persons who are not registered as refugees. Its information is based on requests by returning registered refugees for transfer of their UNRWA registration records from Jordan, Lebanon or the Syrian Arab Republic to the areas to which they have returned. The Agency would not necessarily be aware of the return of any registered refugees who did not request the

transfer of their registration records. So far as is known to the Agency, from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010, 376 refugees registered with UNRWA returned to the West Bank and 272 to the Gaza Strip from places outside the occupied Palestinian territory. It should be noted that some of these may not have been displaced in 1967 but may have been displaced in earlier or later years or may be members of the family of a displaced registered refugee. Thus, taking into account the estimate given in paragraph 4 of the previous report (A/64/323), the number of displaced registered refugees who are known by the Agency to have returned to the occupied territories since June 1967 is about 33,274. The Agency is unable to estimate the total number of displaced inhabitants who have returned. It keeps records only of registered refugees and, as noted above, even those records, particularly with respect to the location of registered refugees, may be incomplete.

5. In connection with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 64/88, the Secretary-General refers to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2009 (A/65/13) and to the previous reports of the Commissioner-General for accounts of the continuous and ongoing assistance provided by UNRWA to persons displaced and in need of continued assistance.